

In connection with this subject, a few words may be added as to hollows in dolmens and menhirs. The cup hollows have been described (see "Heth and Moab") in Moabite monuments. In Finland such hollows are made in stones, and connected with a charm against diseases, which are conjured into them. In Scotland the same hollows were used for libations of milk. Milk was poured through a hole in a menhir in the western isles off the Scottish coast. Another menhir in Aberdeenshire had a hollow in the top in which rain water accumulates, which the ignorant suppose to spring from the stone, and a cross-shaped stone, called Water Cross, was said to bring down rain when placed upright.

Visiting recently the well known Kits Coty House dolmen, near Maidstone, to see if there were any cup hollows in its table stone (which is slanted just like the table of a Moabite dolmen), I found the side stones pitted with deep hollows, some of which it is impossible to suppose to have been natural erosions. About a quarter of a mile south of Kits Coty House there is a ruined circle of fallen stones (sandstone from the neighbourhood, as is Kits Coty House also). The farm people believe that these stones cannot be counted, a legend which is I believe not peculiar to this circle alone. I found in some of the stones of this circle (which are 7 to 8 feet long) holes like those in the Cotty House, but still more plainly cut with the object of holding something. Perhaps, as in so many other cases, libations of blood or milk, honey, or water, were once poured on these holy stones, or small offerings placed in the stone itself, by those who regarded these monuments as sacred. The offering was placed on the top of the stone in the case of Markulim as above noted. One of the best examples of such holes in side stones is noticed by Fergusson, in the famous covered dolmen at Gavr Innis in Brittany.

There is another circle at Addington Park, near Maidstone, which I have not yet been able to visit, which has a curious outlying cairn on the east or north-east. We may compare the circle and gigantic cairn of Wâdy Jideid in Moab.

C. R. C.

THE ARAMAIC ALPHABET.

In my paper on Hebrew inscriptions, published in the *Quarterly Statement*, October, 1883, I have mentioned the inscription at 'Arâk el Emîr. This we both copied and photographed, and my original copy made on the spot differs in the first letter from that of previous writers. According to Levy, it has the form of a rude *Teth* open at the top.

According to my copy it is round like an O, and could only read as an *Ain*.

π ʔ ʕ ʔ ʕ

I did not when copying the text reflect on the importance of this difference, but the photograph, though taken rather at an angle, appears to support the copy, and de Vogüé reads this letter as agreeing also with my view.

The importance of this difference lies in the fact that the inscription appears as a whole to be Aramaic rather than Phœnician; but that the first letter if it be an *Ain* cannot be Aramaic, but must belong to some alphabet allied to the Moabite Stone, according to the received views. The Aramaic alphabets, whence square Hebrew developed, are peculiarly marked by the open loops of the letters, especially of the *Ain*. In order to satisfy the learned world, a squeeze (which would require a ladder), or a new photograph of very large size, may become necessary; but it seems strange that such a difference of copy should occur in so very distinct and well preserved a text, and I incline to believe that my copy, made without any reference to the reading of the text, is correct.

Now the inscriptions from Medeba seem to present us with exactly the same problem, and their genuineness is rendered the more probable, as some of their most suspicious forms have (as Dr. Taylor kindly points out to me) been found also in unquestionably genuine texts from Arabia. In No. 2 of the Medeba texts we find two letters almost identical with two in the 'Arâk el Emîr text, namely,



The first of these is small, like the *Ain* of the South Semitic Alphabets, the second appears to be an Aramaic letter.

Now almost the only great problem concerning the alphabet which remains to be solved, is that of the connection of the South and North Semitic Alphabets. The link may perhaps exist, not in Arabia, but in Moab, and the Medeba texts may serve to point it out. It seems that, contrary to expectation, forms of the Aramaic may occur with Phœnician or South Semitic forms in the same inscription. The 'Arak el Emîr text in all probability dates as early as 176 B.C., and presents the same confusion of two alphabets, generally believed to be distinct. We have, it is true, not very much to guide us in drawing conclusions, but the Moabite texts here noticed may perhaps induce palæographical authorities to extend their researches in a new direction in treating the relations of the various branches of the earliest alphabet, that of the Phœnicians. I should note in conclusion that Mr. Doughty has brought home squeezes of some Sinaitic and Aramaic inscriptions from the neighbourhood of Mecca which may perhaps cast light on this question.

C. R. C.